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FEDERAL AND STATE RELATIONS

Report of Committee

[On account of the omission of two numbers of the Bulletin, the following report of the Committee, submitted in 1917, is now first published.]

The committee on State and federal relations, of the American Library Association, has had before it three matters which are still pending, and upon which it desires to report progress and request the coöperation of all librarians. These matters came up in the course of the Special Session of Congress, and prompt and vigorous action on our part may result in the passage of suitable measures by Congress at the December Session.

The committee protested in May against a proposed postage rate upon periodicals, based upon the distance that the copies were transported from the place of publication, believing that such an enactment will discourage the circulation of magazines having an appeal to the whole nation, will promote sectionalism, and will be an additional and unnecessary tax to libraries, especially those in the south and west and consequently far from the places of publication of most periodicals. We were successful, in combination with other individuals and organizations, in having the provision struck out of the bill, but in conference it was slipped in again and is now a part of the law.

While there is a special committee, headed by Dr. M. L. Raney, of the Johns Hopkins University Library, having as its field the importation of books and periodicals from enemy countries, the committee on Federal and state relations, desiring to coöperate with that special committee, came into communication with the committee on Commerce, of the United States Senate, in reference to the Trading-with-the-enemy Act. That bill, as reported to the Senate upon August 15, providing for licenses to be issued for importation, seemed to your committee a very satisfactory measure. However, in confer-

ence, a clause was slipped into the bill which was evidently an attempt to increase the power of censorship, and which seems to make it dangerous for any importer to mail any foreign periodicals, whether in a foreign language or in English. It is desirable that the law be modified, so as to secure without a shadow of a doubt to American libraries, privileges equal to those enjoyed by English libraries.

An Act of Congress recently passed, prohibits transmission through the mails of newspapers and magazines containing liquor advertisements. This law has as its professed purpose the prevention of orders for liquor sent to business concerns in adjoining states, by persons living in so-called dry territory. The law as passed, however, is so broad in its terms that the Post Office Department has held in some places that it excludes foreign magazines from the mails, and in that way prevents the receipt by libraries of certain American periodical publications. Obviously, advertisements printed in European magazines will not have much response from the United States, and the admission of foreign magazines to the mails will have no appreciable result in the way of an importation of intoxicating beverages. It is most important that public libraries be able to procure through the mails, at the earliest possible time, newspapers and magazines published in Europe, almost all of which contain advertisements of alcoholic liquors. At this time, when coöperation with and understanding of our Allies is of paramount importance, it is a most regrettable mistake to cut off from the public reading rooms of our libraries representative magazines of England, France and other countries, by the side of whose armies our troops will shortly be battling in the endeavor to secure the victory of righteousness and to restore honor to the world. To hinder the people of the United States from having access to such magazines, deprives us of the best medium through which our under-

standing of and sympathy with our Allies can be secured. Without such understanding and sympathy, our alliance cannot secure the permanent good which the sacrifice of the lives and money of the Americans should accomplish. Your committee does not believe that the placing of American magazines in libraries, even though these magazines contain advertisements of liquor, will increase materially the amount of such liquor which is drunk, while it enables the people to have that wide information which such an educational institution as a library ought to give to the citizens of the area for whose intellectual advancement it is responsible. If the complete privilege of receiving such magazines be not given to the libraries, surely at the least the law should be amended so as to limit its effect to periodicals printed in the United States. With such limitations the purpose of the statute will be fulfilled, and the public library will not be impeded in its duty of educating the people.

It has come to our attention that publishers are discontinuing the presentation of complimentary copies of magazines to libraries, stating that the postal law no longer allows any such presentation. Your committee thereupon entered into correspondence with the Post Office Department, and is in receipt of a letter under date of December 6, from the Third Assistant Postmaster General, stating, "that there is no specific authority of law for any free circulation of a second class publication except as sample copies within the limits prescribed in paragraphs four and five, section 436 of the Postal Laws and Regulations. It has, however, never been deemed necessary to question the distribution or the mailing at publishers' second class rates of postage of a *few* complimentary copies, provided the interest prompting a given publisher's action is a friendly rather than a business one."

Respectfully submitted,

BERNARD C. STEINER,
Chairman.